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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SOFIA 000450

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: BULGARIA: PM FOCUSED RULE OF LAW; U.S. PARTNERSHIP

REF: SOFIA 420

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Ordway for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Prime Minister Borissov stressed the importance of U.S. support on rule of law reform in his first meeting with new Charge d'Affaires Ordway, and urged Washington to send top-level law enforcement officials to Bulgaria to help advance his reform agenda. Buoyed by very positive poll numbers, Borissov recapped his early progress, including the removal of the controversial and ineffective leadership of the State Agency for National Security (DANS), promotion of numerous Western-trained officers to top law enforcement positions and preliminary work on legislation to crack down on organized crime and corruption. Borissov is aware of the difficulty of realizing deep reform in a short period with tight budgets, but he pledged he would move forward "aggressively" to achieve the progress the public demands. END SUMMARY.

The Law Enforcement Prime Minister

¶2. (C) With both his Interior Minister and Defense Minister present, the Prime Minister noted his long track record of cooperation with the United States on law enforcement issues and expressed his deep appreciation for U.S. assistance. He emphasized that all of his top appointments are experienced professionals who have participated in U.S.-sponsored training and who enjoy long-standing good relations with the embassy. His career in law enforcement, he said, taught him the value of U.S. cooperation, and he believes U.S. expertise, training and technical assistance are now more important than ever to Bulgaria.

¶3. (C) Borissov asked that, to the extent possible, the United States ramp up its law enforcement assistance in Bulgaria, particularly in combating organized crime, counternarcotics, smuggling and border security, and counter-terrorism. He noted that Bulgarian organized crime groups are very well integrated into regional criminal networks as Bulgaria lies at the crossroads of the Caucasus and the Western Balkans. These groups, he said, are the equivalent of well-funded and well-organized international criminal "armies" and Bulgaria highly values U.S. expertise and global reach in the fight against them.

Afghanistan: Increasing Bulgaria's Bang for the Buck

¶4. (C) In Afghanistan, the Prime Minister noted that Bulgaria's 474 deployed troops make it a very solid contributor to NATO efforts given its size and GDP. He

expressed concern that Bulgarian forces in Afghanistan were divided into too many small contingents across several regional commands, and as a result had neither the impact nor the recognition they deserved. He is interested in plans to combine and if necessary augment Bulgarian forces in Afghanistan to form a larger, more autonomous unit, and he seeks U.S. advice on the appropriate configuration and location. The Prime Minister stressed that budgets were tight and that U.S. assistance was critical to maximizing the impact of Bulgaria's overseas deployments. The number of troops overseas would not be reduced, he said, but he requested that we work together on a consolidation plan for Bulgarian forces and find ways they could take on more ambitious missions and contribute more to the common fight in Afghanistan without increasing the cost of the operation to the Defense Ministry.

PM Willing to Wade into Commercial Disputes

15. (C) Ordway thanked Borissov for his efforts to resolve a commercial dispute involving U.S. firm AES, and stressed the importance of improving Bulgaria's image as an investor-friendly economy. The Prime Minister agreed, saying he would not hesitate to get personally involved when important commercial disputes involving international investors could not be resolved at a lower level.

16. (C) COMMENT: As Borissov pushes forward with his campaign promise to clean house, the first signs of positive change are beginning to show. It is still too early to know what this new government can achieve, but the PM's ambition

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has not waned, even as the plummeting economy has restricted his room for maneuver. As a whole, Borissov's appointments have been excellent, and he has moved quickly to oust the worst appointees of the previous administration. The arrest of the notoriously corrupt former Forestry Agency Director Yurukov this week received public praise, and Borissov has taken the first steps to create an interagency task force to combat organized crime. He is obviously trying to do the right thing on rule of law and strongly desires U.S. recognition for his efforts. He will continue to have an uphill climb as entrenched corrupt interests find their footing, but with political momentum and a very competent team behind him, the present is the most attractive opportunity for reform Bulgaria has seen in almost a decade. At this critical juncture, additional technical and expert assistance and high-level visits will have an exceptionally high impact as we seek to maintain positive momentum on our rule of law priorities.

ORDWAY